

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
White River Field Office  
73544 Hwy 64  
Meeker, CO 81641

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**NUMBER:** CO-110-2005-033-EA

**CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER** (optional): Rangely Weber Sand Unit

**PROJECT NAME:** Water Injection Lines

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:**

Gray B-3: SWNE, sec. 18, T. 2N, R. 102W, 155' to SWNE, sec. 18, T. 2N, R. 102W  
Fee 17: NESE sec. 18, 1027' to NWSE sec. 18, T. 2N, R. 102W

**APPLICANT:** Chevron Production Company

**ISSUES AND CONCERNS** (optional):

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:**

***Background/Introduction:***

**Proposed Action:** Applicant is proposing to construct two new water injection flow lines. For the Fee 17 lines there will be approximately 1047' of 3" Star High Pressure fiberglass and 20' of 3" cemented lined pipe. For the Gray B 3 lines Chevron proposes to run approximately 182' of 3" Star High Pressure fiberglass and 27' of 3" sch 40 cement lined pipe with exterior wrap. The typical 40' right of way is requested and the line will be buried 42" deep with ditch tape and staked through out. Total disturbance for this project would be approximately 1.13 acres.

**No Action Alternative:** The project would not be authorized and there would be no additional environmental impacts.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:**

**NEED FOR THE ACTION:** To respond to the request by applicant to exercise lease rights and develop hydrocarbon reserves.

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:** The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-5

Decision Language: “Make federal oil and gas resources available for leasing and development in a manner that provides reasonable protection for other resource values.”

### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:**

**STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH:** In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

### **CRITICAL ELEMENTS**

#### **AIR QUALITY**

*Affected Environment:* There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by the proposed action. During periods of low precipitation, air quality in the area of the proposed action is often diminished by dust caused by human disturbance.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The proposed right-of-way would result in short term, local impacts to air quality due to dust being blown into the air from an increase in vehicle traffic.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* No increase in dust will occur.

*Mitigation:* None

#### **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

*Affected Environment:* Gray B 3 injection pipeline: the proposed pipeline is located in the Rangely Field which has been inventoried (Larralde 1981) and is covered by an agreement with the Colorado SHPO. There are no sites recorded in the proposed pipeline corridor.

Fee 17 injection pipeline: the proposed pipeline is located in the Rangely Field which has been inventoried (Larralde 1981) and is covered by an agreement with the Colorado SHPO. There are no sites recorded in the proposed pipeline corridor.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* Gray B 3 injection pipeline: the proposed pipeline will not impact any known cultural resources.

Fee 17 injection pipeline: the proposed pipeline will not impact any known cultural resources.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

*Mitigation:* Gray B 3 and Fee 17 injection pipelines: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

## **INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES**

*Affected Environment:* The proposed action is located within Alkaline Slope and Clayey Salt desert ecological sites, which are dominated by salt tolerant vegetation. The dominant plant community for these sites consists of greasewood, and various saltbrushes such as shadscale, Gardner saltbrush, mat saltbush, and fourwing saltbrush. The understory of these shrubs is dominated by western wheatgrass, Colorado wildrye, and squirreltail. Cheatgrass is an undesirable, invasive, and alien plant species that is present within the locality of the proposed action.

Noxious/invasive weeds which occur in the area include halogeton and cheatgrass. Both of these species are highly adapted to disturbed soils.

Drought conditions are very prevalent within the Coal Oil Basin area, which has hampered the successful establishment of reclaimed plant species of other projects in this area. Therefore, undesirable and invasive annual plant species (i.e. halogeton, cheatgrass) have become dominant in portions of previously disturbed areas which provide little resource value and hinder efforts to meet Public Land Health Standards.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* Both of the weed species found in the area are effectively controlled by establishment of seeded species within disturbed areas. The proposed seed mix, which includes non-native species, is recommended because its associated plant species are highly adapted to this site and offer the greatest opportunity to establish vegetation cover and the resultant soil stabilization, thereby providing a competitive interaction between seeded species and noxious/invasive weeds.

There is always the opportunity for other noxious weed species to be transported onto the proposed action locations by construction and support equipment.

Prompt reclamation with successful establishment would prevent cheatgrass and halogeton from establishing on disturbed sites. If other noxious weeds were to invade the site, prompt control would prevent movement to the adjacent plant communities.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* None

*Mitigation:* Use standard seed mix #1 for reclamation. The applicant will be responsible for eradicating cheatgrass, noxious weeds, and/or problem weeds should they occur and/or increase in density as a result of the proposed action. The applicant will use materials and methods as outlined in the RMP or authorized in advance by the White River Field Office Manager. Application of herbicides must be under field supervision of an EPA certified pesticide applicator. Herbicides must be registered by the EPA and application proposals must be approved by the BLM.

## **MIGRATORY BIRDS**

*Affected Environment:* The project area is encompassed by arid salt desert shrublands consisting principally of shadscale, basin big sage and greasewood. Herbaceous groundcover is comprised mainly of native grasses with low densities of halogeton and cheatgrass. These salt desert communities typically support species such as vesper and sage sparrow, western meadowlark, sage thrasher and horned lark.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* Earthwork associated with this project is expected to be completed in advance of the breeding season and would have no potential to interfere materially with nests. The proposed action involves a small area (approximately 1 ac) and would likely have little to no effect on availability of suitable nesting habitat.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* There would be no action authorized that would have potential to influence the reproductive activities or habitat of migratory birds.

*Mitigation:* Earthwork will be conducted outside the period between late-May through mid-July to avoid the remote chance of disrupting the reproductive activities of migratory birds.

#### **THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)**

*Affected Environment:* The project area is broadly encompassed by white-tailed prairie dog habitat. A field visit conducted during January indicated two single-entrance burrow would be affected by the proposed action (one along Gray B #4, one along Gray B #3). The proposed injection line corridor for Gray B #4 parallels an existing pipeline along which 16 single-entrance burrows are located; however these burrows should not be affected by the proposed action.

Prairie dogs and their burrow systems are important components of burrowing owl habitat, as well as potential habitat for reintroduced populations of black-footed ferret. Burrowing owls, a State threatened species, are uncommon in this Resource Area. These birds return to occupy a maintained burrow system in early April and begin nesting soon after. Most birds have left the area by September. While burrowing owls have been documented in Rangely Oil Field, no burrowing owl nesting activity has been recorded near the proposed injection line corridor.

Under the auspices of a non-essential, experimental population rule, black-footed ferrets have been released annually in Coyote Basin (eight miles southwest) and Wolf Creek (13 miles northeast) of Rangely Oil Field since 1999 and 2001, respectively. The rule applies to any ferrets that may occupy or eventually be released in northwest Colorado and northeast Utah. Although there is no direct continuity between Coyote Basin or Wolf Creek and the project site (i.e., lesser physical barriers and habitats unoccupied by prairie dog) there is a strong likelihood that ferrets have colonized and successfully breed in Rangely Oil Field. Ferrets are wholly reliant on prairie dogs for food and shelter. Ferret breeding activities begin in early March, with birthing

beginning in early May. Young ferrets generally begin to emerge by mid-July. There have been no verified sightings of ferrets, nor any known reproduction occurring in Rangely Oil Field.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The project would have no short or long term influence on prairie dog abundance or distribution by itself or as habitat for black-footed ferret or burrowing owl. The proposed injection line encompasses a small area in which relatively few single-entrance burrows will be affected. It is highly unlikely that any subsurface disturbance associated with this proposed action would intersect a prairie dog burrow system occupied by a ferret.

With regards to burrowing owl, prairie dog and ferret breeding issues, it would be advantageous to schedule earthwork outside the period between 1 April and 15 July. Avoiding this timeframe would provide sufficient time for the rearing, emergence, and dispersal of young from natal burrows and effectively eliminate the likelihood of adversely affecting these animals' reproductive efforts. This method of cooperatively minimizing risk to ferrets outside designated ferret management areas is consistent with the Wolf Creek Ferret Management Plan.

Until burrowing owls arrive on these breeding ranges in April, there is no credible means of assessing impacts to nest activity. In the event earthwork associated with this project cannot be completed prior to early April, BLM would conduct nest surveys on the affected injection line and conditions of approval would be applied to defer activities that may interfere with successful nest outcomes (under provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act).

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* There would be no potential influence on prairie dogs as habitat for burrowing owl and black-footed ferret in the case of a no action alternative.

*Mitigation:* Earthwork will be conducted outside the period of 1 April to 15 July to avoid the remote chance of disrupting the reproductive activities of ferrets, burrowing owl, and prairie dogs.

*Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species:* Public Land Health Standards for those special status species associated with white-tailed prairie dogs, including black-footed ferret and burrowing owl, in the Rangely Oil Field are currently met. As conditioned, this project would have no adverse influence on populations, available extent of suitable habitat, or the reproductive activities of these three species. Thus, there would be no influence on meeting the land health standard. Small incremental gains in perennial grass cover associated with successful reclamation and subsurface tillage associated with flowline installation may be expected to bolster local populations of prairie dogs and potentially benefit individual burrowing owl and black-footed ferret—effects consistent with continued meeting of the Land Health Standards.

## **WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID**

*Affected Environment:* There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

*Mitigation:* The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

## **WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)**

*Affected Environment:* The proposed action is in the Sinking Water watershed which is tributary to the White River below Rangely. Limited data is available for Stinking Water. Past instantaneous measurements of flow and water quality indicate the water to be high in total dissolved solids. The drainage is found in segment 22, which is all tributaries to the White River, including all wetlands, lakes and reservoirs, from a point immediately above the confluence with Douglas Creek to the Colorado/Utah border, except for specific listings in Segment 23.

A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. This well is in a Category 1, Priority 2, watershed (The Lower White) identified in the Unified Watershed Assessment report. The state has reasons to believe this watershed has water quality problems (sediment and salinity loads) that may impair the watershed. Information needs to be gathered before total maximum daily loads (TMDL) will be determined.

The State has classified this stream segment as Aquatic Life Warm 1, Recreation 1a, Water Supply and Agriculture. The state has further defined water quality parameters with table values. These standards reflect the ambient water quality and define maximum allowable concentrations for the various water quality parameters. The anti-degradation rule applies to this segment meaning no further water quality degradation is allowable that would interfere with or become harmful to the designated uses.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* Impacts to water quality from development of this pad and flowline would be similar to other surface disturbing activities. Some of the impacts would be exposure of soil surface to wind and water erosion, reduced water

quality due to erosion of sediment and salt, off flowline right of way, and piping or rill erosion where flowline disturbance are exposed to climatic elements. These impacts would be short term until re-vegetation has occurred.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* Impacts are not anticipated from not allowing the proposed action.

*Mitigation:* None.

*Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality:* Water quality of Stinking Water meets the current Public Land Health Standards and will continue to do so with the implementation of the proposed action.

### **CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:**

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, wetlands and riparian zones, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. This project would have no conceivable potential for influencing riparian attributes addressed in the Standards. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

### **NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS**

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

#### **SOILS** (includes a finding on Standard 1)

*Affected Environment:* Baseline soils data have been collected for Rio Blanco County by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and are published in an order III Soil Survey. This survey is available for review from the White River Field Office. The table below identifies soil characteristics for the soils encountered from the proposed action.

Proposed Action	Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Range site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
Gray B-4	16	Chipeta silty clay loam	3-25%	Clayey Saltdesert	4-16	Rapid	High	10-20
Gray B-4 and Fee 17	17	Chipeta silty clay loam eroded		Clayey Saltdesert	4-16	Rapid	Very high	10-20



These soils in the table above have been mapped as being saline in the White River ROD/RMP. As a federal agency, we are required comply with the Colorado Salinity Control Act.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* Short-term impacts would be expected from any surface disturbing activity. Impacts from the proposed action would be loss of the protective vegetation cover, possible increase in salt and sedimentation during storm events and soil compaction from equipment. These impacts could continue until successful re-vegetation has occurred. Re-establishing vegetation as soon as it's allowable would be favorable in controlling any erosion problems that may occur.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* In the no-action alternative, neither the surface disturbance nor impacts to soils resources would occur.

*Mitigation:* The operator will be responsible for monitoring for salts leaching from soils. If large salt deposits begin to appear, the operator will notify BLM, together they will coordinate the application of best management practices to help mitigate the problem.

*Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils:* The proposed action will have no effect on the soils' ability to meet the land health standard.

## **VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)**

*Affected Environment:* The proposed action is located within Alkaline Slope and Clayey Saltdesert ecological sites, which are dominated by salt tolerant vegetation. The dominate plant community for these sites consist of greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) and various saltbrushes such as shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*), Gardner saltbrush (*Atriplex gardneri*), mat saltbush (*Atriplex corrugate*), and fourwing saltbrush (*Atriplex canescens*). Other brushes intermixed in the area are rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*) and big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). The understory of these shrubs is dominated by western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Colorado wildrye (*Elymus salinus*), and squirreltail (*Sitanion hystrix*). Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is an undesirable, invasive, and alien plant species that is present within the locality of the proposed action.

Drought conditions are very prevalent within the Coal Oil Basin area, which has hampered the successful establishment of reclaimed plant species of other projects in this area. Therefore, undesirable and invasive annual plant species (i.e. halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), cheatgrass) have become dominate in portions of previously disturbed areas which provide little resource value and hinder efforts to meet Public Land Health Standards.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The proposed action would disturb a mid to low seral class of desert shrub community for a total of 1.13 acres. The short-term soil and vegetation disturbances would be offset in the long-term by reclaiming the disturbed area with a seed mix that is suited for this ecological site. As this area has a component of cheatgrass and halogeton within the plant community, successful re-vegetation efforts would slightly increase desirable plant species within the rangelands.

Previously this area has entailed considerable impacts from oil and gas activities from a network of well pads, pipeline corridors, and access roads, which have resulted in a fragmentation and reduction of available, productive ecological sites.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* None

*Mitigation:* Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas associated with the proposed action, including all cut and fill slopes and topsoil stockpiles, with Standard Seed Mix #1 of the White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) (B-19, Appendix B). Seeding rates in the RMP are shown as pounds of Pure Live Seed (PLS) per acre and apply to drill seeding. For broadcast application, double the seeding rate and then harrow to insure seed coverage. Applied seed must be certified and free of noxious weeds and seed certification tags must be submitted to the Area Manager within 30 days of seeding. The applicant will be responsible for eradicating cheatgrass, noxious weeds, and/or problem weeds should they occur and/or increase in density as a result of the proposed action. The applicant will use materials and methods as outlined in the RMP or authorized in advance by the White River Field Office Manager.

*Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities* (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The proposed action would disturb a small segment of the Alkaline Slope and Clayey Salt desert ecological sites. Therefore, the action would further fragment these areas to a minimal degree.

Early seral ecological sites associated with the proposed action lack desirable plant species at an appreciable density and frequency level, thus are not meeting standards. This is due to the prevalence of cheatgrass and halogeton within the vegetative understory. A slight positive benefit would be received through a successful re-vegetation effort, thus increasing preferred plant species within this low producing rangeland. Mid seral ecological sites at the proposed action locality have acceptable components within the plant community and are meeting standards.

## **WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)**

*Affected Environment:* There are no aquatic habitats conceivably affected by this action. The White River, representing the nearest aquatic habitat, is separated from the project area by about eight miles of ephemeral channel.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* None

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* None

*Mitigation:* None

*Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities* (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): This project would have no conceivable influence on aquatic habitat conditions addressed in the Standards.

## **WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL** (includes a finding on Standard 3)

*Affected Environment:* This heavily developed portion of Coal Oil Basin is inhabited year-round by a small resident herd of pronghorn. These animals are acclimated to routine oil and gas production activities. A number of raptors forage opportunistically during the winter in Coal Oil Basin, the most common being rough-legged hawks, red-tailed hawks, and golden eagle. The project area and the surrounding area provide no special or unique habitat features (e.g., nesting substrate) or forage base for these birds.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* This project, as mitigated, would have no conceivable adverse consequences on big game distribution or habitat quality. Right-of-way reclamation normally provides herbaceous forage opportunity in excess of that previously existing and in many cases will replace cheatgrass and halogeton-dominated understories almost immediately after construction is complete. While surface disturbance would cause a longer-term reduction in woody forage supply, the incremental shrub reductions are wholly insignificant with respect to the available forage base. Standard reclamation procedures would provide the opportunity to increase the perennial grass component on these corridors in the longer term, increasing ground cover and seed production and prolonging the availability of green herbaceous forage for resident big and non-game animals.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* There would be no potential influence on big game distribution or habitat quality in the case of a no action alternative.

*Mitigation:* None, but see mitigation for T&E Species section above.

*Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities* (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): Much of the ground cover within the Rangely Field is dominated by annual weeds. Although these sites in and of themselves cannot be considered meeting the definition of the land health standard, the majority of the shrubland communities comprising this landscape likely retain sufficient character to support viable populations of resident wildlife, although likely at populations reduced from potential. Subsequent reclamation offers an opportunity to reestablish herbaceous forage and cover conditions (i.e., redevelopment of a perennial bunchgrass component) more consistent with the proper functioning of these arid salt desert communities as wildlife habitat, thus better opportunity to meet the land health standard.

**OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS:** For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise		X	
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations	X		
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

## PALEONTOLOGY

*Affected Environment:* Gray B 3 injection pipeline: the proposed pipeline route is located in an area mapped as the Mancos Shale Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Condition II formation meaning it is known to produce fossils, mostly invertebrate marine fossils and rarely vertebrate marine fossils in this area.

Fee 17 injection pipelines: the proposed pipeline route is located in an area mapped as the Mancos Shale Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Condition II formation meaning it is known to produce fossils, mostly invertebrate marine fossils and rarely vertebrate marine fossils in this area.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* Gray B 3 injection pipeline: there is a very small probability that excavation of the pipeline trench into the underlying bedrock might impact scientifically important fossil material.

Fee 17 injection pipeline: there is a very small probability that excavation of the pipeline trench into the underlying bedrock might impact scientifically important fossil material.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

*Mitigation:* Gray B 3 and Fee 17 injection pipelines: If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

## RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

*Affected Environment:* The proposed action is located in the Artesia Allotment (06308), which is authorized for sheep use by Morapos Sheep Company during the late fall to early spring periods.

The soils within the project area are principally a Billings Silty Clay Loam (Alkaline Slope ecological site) and Chipeta Silty Clay Loam (Clayey Salt-desert ecological site), which are dominated by a salt tolerant desert shrub and grass community. These brush/grass communities are utilized by sheep for meeting forage requirements, particularly during winter months. These soil types have a high clay content that are moderate to highly erosive and receives low precipitation with rapid runoff, thus limiting forage production and hampering re-vegetation efforts.

Drought conditions are very prevalent within the Coal Oil Basin area, which has hampered the successful establishment of reclaimed plant species of other projects in this area. Therefore, undesirable and invasive annual plant species (i.e. halogeton, cheatgrass) have become dominant in a portion of these disturbed areas which provide little forage value for livestock.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The individual proposed action would have minimal impacts on the authorized grazing use because the amount of new surface disturbance (1.13 acres) is nominal in regards to the scale of the allotment (43,347 total acres). However, previously this allotment has entailed considerable impacts from oil and gas activities, which have resulted in a reduction and fragmentation of available rangelands and in a loss of forage for grazing use.

A portion of the short-term soil and vegetation disturbances would be offset in the long-term by reclaiming the disturbed area with a seed mix that is suited for this ecological site. As this area has a component of cheatgrass and halogeton within the plant community, successful re-vegetation efforts would slightly increase desirable forage species within the rangelands.

Grazing use by sheep in the Allotment can be authorized from November 28<sup>th</sup> through April 20<sup>th</sup>. If the proposed action was authorized during this timeframe, it would have some limited impacts while sheep are grazing. This is due to the increased activity associated with the development of the proposed action and temporary decrease in rangelands available for grazing. Impacts to livestock grazing may include such influences as a modification in sheep distribution, reduction in available forage, and impediments to livestock grazing and movement.

Overall, this individual proposed action would have no significant direct impact on the authorized Animal Unit Months (AUMs) in the allotments. A slight positive benefit would be received through a successful re-vegetation effort, thus increasing preferred forage plants within this mid to low producing rangeland. However, the cumulative impacts from past, present, and possible future oil and gas activities may have a long-term effect on the native range's carrying

capacity, thus influencing the authorized AUMs. This possible affect would be determined during the grazing permit renewal process.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* None

*Mitigation:* Any livestock control facilities and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition.

## **VISUAL RESOURCES**

*Affected Environment:* The proposed actions are located primarily within a VRM class IV area and partially on private surface (Fee 17). The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

*Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:* The proposed actions are located in an area with sparse vegetation that consists of grasses and brushy species. After pipelines are buried and disturbed area seeded, the proposed action would not be visible from a distance and the proposed action would not dominate the view. The standards of the VRM IV classification would be retained.

*Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:* There would be no additional environmental consequences.

*Mitigation:* None

**CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:** Cumulative impacts from oil and gas development were analyzed in the White River Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS) completed in June 1996. Current development, including the proposed action, has not exceeded the cumulative impacts from the foreseeable development analyzed in the PRMP/FEIS.

**PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:** None

**INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Area of Responsibility</b>
Caroline Hollowed	Environmental Coordinator	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Jed Carling	Range Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Caroline Hollowed	Environmental Coordinator	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Caroline Hollowed	Environmental Coordinator	Soils
Jed Carling	Range Specialist	Vegetation
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Jed Carling	Range Specialist	Rangeland Management
Linda Jones	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

# **Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)**

**CO-110-2005-033-EA**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE:** The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

**DECISION/RATIONALE:** It is my decision to approve development of the flow lines as described in the proposed action, with mitigation measures listed below. This development, with mitigation, is consistent with the decisions in the White River ROD/RMP, and environmental impacts will be minimal.

## **MITIGATION MEASURES:**

1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items,



sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

3. The applicant is responsible for eradicating cheatgrass, noxious weeds, and/or problem weeds should they occur and/or increase in density as a result of the proposed action. The applicant will use materials and methods as outlined in the White River ROD/RMP or authorized in advance by the White River Field Office Manager. Application of herbicides must be under field supervision of an EPA certified pesticide applicator. Herbicides must be registered by the EPA and application proposals must be approved by the BLM.

4. Earthwork will not be permitted during the period of April 1 to July 15 to avoid the remote chance of disrupting the reproductive activities of migratory birds, ferrets, burrowing owls, and prairie dogs.

5. The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

6. The operator will be responsible for monitoring for salts leaching from soils. If large salt deposits begin to appear, the operator will notify BLM, together they will coordinate the application of best management practices to help mitigate the problem.

7. Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas associated with the proposed action, including all cut and fill slopes and topsoil stockpiles, with Standard Seed Mix #1; from the White River ROD/RMP, B-19, Appendix B (see table below). Seeding rates in the RMP are shown as pounds of Pure Live Seed (PLS) per acre and apply to drill seeding. For broadcast application, double the seeding rate and then harrow to insure seed coverage. Applied seed must be certified and free of noxious weeds; seed certification tags must be submitted to the Field Manager within 30 days of seeding.

Seed Mix #	Species (Variety)	Lbs PLS/ Acre	Range sites
1	Siberian wheatgrass (P27)	3	Alkaline Uplands, Badlands, Clayey 7"-9", Clayey
	Russian wildrye (Bozoisky)	2	Salt Desert, Cold Desert Breaks, Cold Desert
	Crested wheatgrass (Hycrest)	3	Overflow, Gravelly 7"-9", Limey Cold Desert, Loamy 7"-9", Loamy Cold Desert, Loamy Salt Desert, Saline Lowland, Salt Desert Breaks, Salt Flats, Salt Meadow Sands 7"-9", Sandy 7"-9", Sandy Cold Desert, Sandy Salt Desert, Shale 7"-9", Shale/Sands Complex, Shallow Loamy, Shallow Sandy, Shallow Slopes, Silty Salt Desert, Silty Swale, Steep Slopes
	Alternates: Yellow sweetclover, Fourwing saltbush, Nuttall saltbush, Winterfat, Annual Sunflower, Western wheatgrass		

8. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

9. Any livestock control facilities and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition.

**NAME OF PREPARER:** Tamara Meagley

**NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:** Caroline Hollowed

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:**

  
Field Manager

**DATE SIGNED:** 01/28/05

**ATTACHMENTS:** Location map of the proposed action.

# Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2005-033-EA

